

FOX SPORTS EXCLUSIVE

Adderall: NFL's new, trendy PED



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"So, they look for a tiny pill or anything else that can help them focus and study better. That can make up for a lack of studying skills they didn't develop early in life."

As far as Adderall being recognized as a focus aid during a game, Bay Area Lab Co-Operative founder Victor Conte told FOXSports.com that drugs like Adderall — despite little literature to back up the effectiveness of such drugs in sports — are indeed considered performance-enhancing.

During his heyday at BALCO, before his facility was raided by federal authorities nearly a decade ago, Conte widely recommended another prescription stimulant — the narcolepsy drug Modafinil — to his elite athlete clientele.

"The players wouldn't be taking (Adderall) if they didn't think it gave them some sort of advantage," Conte said. "It helps with reaction time, and I know football players who have taken it. I know a lot of them."

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Recent positives linked to Adderall seem to back that up. This week, **New England Patriots** defensive lineman **Jermaine Cunningham** became at least the seventh NFL player to cite Adderall as the reason for violating the league's drug policy since the start of training camp.

The others included **Tampa Bay Buccaneers** cornerback **Eric Wright**; **New York Giants** safeties **Tyler Sash** and **Will Hill**; New England Patriots cornerback **Aqib Talib** (a member of the Bucs at the time of the positive test); **Atlanta Falcons** offensive lineman **Joe Hawley**; and **Cleveland Browns** cornerback **Joe Haden**.



THE REAL TEST

If they can't stop cheating by using drugs, **should pro leagues allow PEDs?**

Per the terms of the collectively bargained drug agreement between the NFL and the players union, the NFL is not allowed to disclose the type of substance that results in a positive test. Given that, there is the possibility that players facing a drug-related suspension may be copping to Adderall use, rather than concede the punishment stems from a steroid or narcotic. The stigma of such a suspension may be less damaging.

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"Honestly, I think Adderall is an excuse," said former **Miami Dolphins** linebacker **Channing Crowder**. "Now, if you get busted, you just say it's Adderall and it goes under the rug. The league can't come out and correct you.

"It's better than coming out and saying you did steroids. It's kind of like getting busted for cocaine, but telling your grandma it was marijuana. Marijuana is more socially acceptable."

Adolpho Birch, the NFL senior vice president of law and labor, said Wednesday that a player would only come up positive for an amphetamine during league-administered drug testing — not for Adderall specifically. Birch added that, among more than 20 players who ran afoul of the league's drug policy this year, there has been an uptick in amphetamine positives.

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None of these players would have been suspended if they had a legitimate, clinical need for Adderall, which often is prescribed to children and adults with attention deficit disorder (ADD) or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

The NFL Players Association is in the midst of alerting its membership about the need to file for a therapeutic use exemption, or a TUE, to avoid the four-game bans that come with a positive test for Adderall without such a waiver.



PEDS AND KIDS

When it comes to athletes using steroids and our children potentially emulating them, **there are no easy answers.**

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While players have increasingly turned to Adderall to help sharpen their game focus, Gardner said the drug is no panacea as a study aid. Some players may gain no benefit at all.

"I was asked to evaluate one tight end to see how well he'd fit in with a team," Gardner said. "(The player) told me, 'I didn't do much learning in college.' It soon became clear that he was illiterate.

"Coaches in the NFL expect the players to be able to take in the information on their own, so they don't spend a lot of time teaching players how to learn. These guys have the athletic skills, but not always the academic rigor in their backgrounds that will make them successful."

Gardner said that Adderall can become a crutch and that the drug is far from benign. It's listed as a Schedule II drug by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration for its stimulant and addictive properties, and Adderall can cause sudden death via heart attack, especially for adults with heart conditions.

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The NFL does not disclose how many of its players have exemptions for Adderall, although Birch said the drug's use in the NFL is lower than the overall male population within the same age group. A player not only has to have a valid diagnosis for ADD or ADHD along with a prescription for Adderall, but the TUE filed by the player needs the approval for football's independent administrator.

Crowder said he doesn't need statistics to show that Adderall could be overused in the NFL.

"I played six years with a struggling team, and I must have had 400 different teammates," Crowder said. "Only one of them needed to be on Adderall. If you are a cornerback in the NFL and you have to cover (Houston Texans receiver) Andre Johnson, wouldn't you want something that will keep you focused and calm you down?"

"Maybe I should have taken it when I played."



COMING CLEAN

The Mitchell Report blew the lid off MLB's steroid culture. See which players **have admitted to PED use**.

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